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CORONA

Cover Story (and Draft)

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23 June 1958

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Requirements:

1. Unclassified story for use in public relations.
2. Classified story for use in areas where CORONA requirements are apt to become known to personnel working on the WS-117-L program.
3. Explanations for individual contractors to use when having to account for their relations with other companies.

Unclassified Story:

In view of the current international race to develop a means whereby man can be safely returned from outer space, it would appear best to explain all launchings as being tests of re-entry utilizing short-lived missiles. The capsule could thus be explained as a recoverable device containing instruments that will measure the gravity forces and other phenomenon associated with re-entry such as the deceleration forces and heat pulses imposed upon the vehicle during re-entry into the sensible atmosphere. Such studies will gradually gather together data, through the use of instruments, mice and primates, which scientists will use to develop a safe and reliable means for re-entry of human life as experiments progress to that stage.

In a situation such as this, the program must be able to account for the entire series of launchings. Public interest will naturally be aroused by the press who can be counted upon to follow the series very closely.

NRO review(s) completed.

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The concern of the press will not always begin with the actual launching, for there will be occasions when they learn of the preparations being made at the launch site. The program, therefore, should be prepared to state the purpose of each launching, and at some future time, announce the results. The immediate concern of the press will most likely be to learn whether the particular missile went into its prescribed orbit. They will then expect to be advised as to the success of the re-entry, following up, at some future date, with inquiries as to the scientific knowledge obtained from such flights.

With the above in mind, the most logical procedure to use in dealing with the press, would be to announce the first few launchings as tests of the primary vehicle. These would be followed by a series of instrumented flights with re-entry being attempted. Actually, one or several of these launchings should be bio-medical, though no mention of this fact need ever reach the press or the general public. The launching of a primate under the cover of an instrumented flight will enable the program to prove the safe return of the primate first, thus avoiding possible public embarrassment through a premature public announcement. Data obtained from such a flight could then be withheld for use in support of a photo-recon launching; the primate tests being used for its cover. Under no circumstances should there be any special or unusual precautions associated with a photo-recon launching. There should be a normal announcement to the press, either before or after the actual launch, depending upon the

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3.

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timing of their concern, utilizing bio-medical or bio-astronautical studies as the purpose of the flight.

If this sequence of launchings is followed, there will always be data available from previous launchings to adequately cover the CORONA missions and satisfy the hunger of the press and general public.

It is recognized that several personnel assigned to the launch pad will have to be cleared and told the true mission. Specifically, those coming in physical contact with the missile after it has reached the launch pad will have to be made knowledgeable of its mission. Others associated with the launching to a lesser degree, who are not in a position to know that a camera has replaced the primate but do know that a primate is not being launched, should be told that in the best interest of national security, public announcements are being altered. The purpose of this will be stated as being a means of denying the opposition a step by step progress report of the test series. Persons to whom this statement will be made should be impressed with the fact that this is not an attempt to hide failures or mistakes but rather it is a protective measure. The actual number of persons so informed should be kept to a minimum so as not to reduce the value of the statement; the theory being, that if a large number are told, it becomes general knowledge, whereas, if a few are led to believe they have been given classified information, they will and are bound to keep it secret.

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Classified Story:

Within the Ballistic Missiles Division there is a need to account for the required horizontal flight pattern in low altitude orbit. To cover this requirement, ARPA will instruct BMD to covertly conduct some astrophysical measurements using low altitude (140 mile) satellites on polar orbits. These satellites will require instrumentation which must be recovered. The program will be explained as being an effort to determine the existence and characteristics of certain phenomenon which may seriously influence design of future military space vehicles and curtail further man in space travel. Though such an explanation would not satisfy a physicist, it will satisfy the category of personnel with whom we are concerned, namely the flight control personnel ~~with whom we are concerned~~ and others who will not be CORONA briefed.

To support the classified story and to logically account for the procurement of additional Thor booster vehicles, ARPA will dispatch a memorandum to the Air Force which will set forth the WS-117L requirements.

The memorandum will state that a review of the WS-117L Program indicates that additional Thor-boosted WS-117L vehicles will be required over and above the ten currently authorized. At least nine additional Lockheed vehicles are required to meet a flight schedule of one per month, November 58 to Mar 59 inclusive, and two or more per month, April 59 to October 59 inclusive. Accordingly, the Air Force will be requested to take appropriate action to protect production lead times.

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ARPA will indicate that they intend to have sufficient vehicles provided for the conduct of engineering flights; accomplish currently scheduled bio-astronautic flights; establish confidence in the WS-117L vehicle reliability in view of its possible later use in the man-in-space programs and to provide for some special payloads designed to investigate and measure certain suspected space phenomena which may greatly influence future military space activities. ARPA will ask that AFBMD and LMSD provide secure arrangements so that these special payloads can be handled on a sensitive basis. Furthermore, in view of possible international and domestic complications that might result from bio-astronautic experiments with animals, it is desired that strict security be maintained relative to these aspects of the THOR-boosted program.

The letter will further indicate that in connection with possible payloads, it appears that the load carrying capability of the vehicle system will be taxed. This in turn would dictate low altitude orbits. Suitable technical provisions, therefore should be made to meet this requirement.

Contractor explanations:

1. Lockheed/General Electric. GE can admit its affiliation with the LMSD since they are manufacturing the re-entry capsule for both photo-recon and bio-medical satellite flights. Both are identical in appearance when they are shipped to the Lockheed Sunnyvale plant. It will be at the latter point where a given number of the capsules are covertly

6.

NRO
25X1

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transferred to [] for the cutting of the camera aperture and other needed modifications.

2. Lockheed/Itek Corp. ITEK requires a legitimate customer for the 12-14 cameras they will be producing with Fairchild as a sub-contractor. Lockheed, their true customer is prepared to make payment either in sterile fashion or by overt payment. The latter means would identify Lockheed as the prime contractor but would not necessarily reveal the affiliation of the Missile Systems Division. Therefore, within ITEK it can be said that the contract calls for a prototype camera and a few production models for special aircraft installation. Shipments can then be designated for delivery to Burbank, California rather than Sunnyvale, California, though in reality they will be removed from the normal shipment handling after each camera has been labeled. With camera production at one per month, it would appear possible to transport same by [] arranged by the CORONA Project Headquarters. The procedure suggested is that each camera be picked up at Boston or Long Island, depending upon whether shipments will originate from ITEK or Fairchild, and transported to Washington, D. C. where the labels will be changed to permit bonded shipment to the LMSD []

25X1

NRO

NRO

25X1

3. ITEK/Fairchild. The most logical explanation to use to cover the ITEK and Fairchild relationship is to carry out the same story used to explain the Lockheed/ITEK contract. In this instance ITEK will serve as the designers and Fairchild as the firm selected to do the fabrication. Again,

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7.

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every effort will be made not to connect LMSD with the camera being produced.

4. GE/ITEK/Fairchild. The required contacts made at GE by personnel of ITEK and Fairchild will be so few in number that it is best to explain them as normal business meetings of sales promotion attributed to products other than those allied to cameras and missiles.

NRO 25X1

Distributed to DPS Staffs
and all Contractors.

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